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THE PROGRESS OF SCIENCE

SIR HENRY ROSCOE

THE recent appearance of a biographical sketch of Sir Henry Roscoe, by his former student and friend, Sir Edward Thorpe, has added much information concerning the life and work of the eminent English chemist. At the International Congress of Applied Chemistry in London in 1909, Roscoe was honorary president and Sir William Ramsay acting president. The outbreak of the war produced in these two preeminent British chemists, both of whom have since died, a striking difference of attitude toward Germany and German contributions to science.

Ramsay contributed many articles to *Nature*, in which his hostile attitude toward everything German was apparent. "The Teutonic ideal is the compulsion of the individual by an omnipresent oligarchy." As regards the individual Germans: "They are disliked as business men; their methods are not regarded as fair, or their word as trustworthy. Even in the world of science this spirit is by no means unknown. In spite of their boasted progress in what they imagine to be civilization, they have been relapsing into barbarism." The remedy, suggested by Ramsay, is that "The nation . . . must be 'bled white.'" Would the progress of science be thereby retarded? He thinks not. "The greatest advances in scientific thought have not been made by members of the German race. The restriction of the Teutons will relieve the world from a deluge of mediocrity. Much of their previous reputation has been due to Hebrews resident among them."

As Thorpe points out in his biography the attitude of Roscoe was very different. As a student of

Bunsen at Heidelberg and afterwards he contracted friendships with Magnus, Rose, Helmholz, Kopp, Kuchhoff, Quincke and other eminent men of science. In later years he viewed with deepest concern the growth of strained relations between England and Germany. His most recent publications were attempts to lessen the breach. "It would be an outrage to civilization," he wrote, "if two countries so closely allied in blood and intellectual development should come to blows." His last days, it is said, were filled with regret that international science should be trampled down by these nations in conflict.

Returning to Thorpe's account of Roscoe's scientific work, the opinion is expressed that his name will be longest remembered as that of the man who first established a provincial school of chemistry in England. Previously the departments of chemistry had been a subordinate division of the schools of medicine, at which even such eminent scientific men as Graham, Williamson and Frankland had failed to attract great numbers of students. Under Roscoe, the chemical laboratory of the University of Manchester became famous throughout the world, and at times students from nearly all civilized lands were to be found there.

Although Roscoe devoted much of his time to his class-room, to the development of his laboratory as an institution and to other educational matters, he was a diligent and successful investigator of chemical problems. Some sixty titles dealing with research appear under his name. His most important contributions were on photochemistry, reflecting his experiences with Bunsen, and his work on vanadium.



SIR HENRY ROSCOE.

Studies of importance were also made on the constitution of aqueous solutions of acids and on perchloric acid and its compounds. Roscoe did notable service to science by making more available for general use the work of Bunsen and Kirchhoff on spectroscopy, and by the publication of texts and manuals of chemistry in form suitable for students and laymen. Roscoe's career in research practically came to an end with his election to Parliament in 1886, although to his death he was a scientific and educational leader.

Thorpe describes Roscoe as a man of uniformly charming personality, always happy, serene of mind and most affectionately regarded by students and friends. A man of great energy himself, he was a skillful teacher, with a rare capacity to get the best out of his students. As a speaker he was simple and direct.

Roscoe came from a family of legal, literary and artistic merit. His father, a judge in Liverpool, wrote a "Digest" which was, for many years, a standard treatise. His grandfather, a member of Parliament, made a definite contribution to literature by his "Lives of Lorenzo de Medici and Leo X." He also made studies on botanical subjects. On Roscoe's mother's side were forbears of literary and artistic ability.

FOOD EXHIBITION AT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

A food value and economy exhibition has recently been opened at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Specimen meals adapted to all classes of the community, including many varieties of foods of high dietetic value that have hitherto been little used in this country, have been displayed. Among the new features are wild rice, both in its raw and cooked state; several new varieties

of war bread; stale bread re-baked by a novel process, and an exhibit of Chinese foods.

Unutilized sea foods were shown in variety. A fillet of shark meat, by virtue of its glistening whiteness and delicate texture, invited more general use. The periwinkle and sea mussel were shown in several preparations, and seaweeds were presented in the form of salads or vegetable dishes.

Many wild or primitive foods were exhibited in attractive guises. The acorn, for example, for many years a favorite food of the Indians of California, was shown in the various stages of preparation. The Indians are accustomed to beat and stir the acorn meal in a large vessel of water, permitting the acrid tannin to dissolve, after which the fluid is poured off, the meal dried and reground. The resulting acorn flour may be converted into a palatable and nutritious food. Totopoztl, a more primitive relative of the modern flaked breakfast food, was revealed in eight different shades, the colors being determined by the character of the brightly hued corn from which it was made. Explorers in Mexico and South America who have long been acquainted with this food declare the recipe to be well worth consideration. An instructive exhibit was the section devoted to corn (maize) and corn products. The present scarcity of wheat and other grains has brought corn into deserved prominence. Chemical analysis, as well as common experience, has shown Indian corn to be a very nutritious food, being rich in fats and nitrogenous matter and excelling all other cereals in albuminoids. Mixed with rye or whole wheat flour, corn may be made into excellent although coarse bread, varieties of which are extensively used on the European front. As a breakfast cereal, corn meal is, of